Numb. 65

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

Quicquid agunt Homines noſtri Farrago Libelli.

From *Tueſday September* 6. to *Thurſday September* 8. 1709.

Will's Coffee-houſe, September 7.

I CAME hither this Evening, and expected nothing elſe but mutual Congratulations in the Company on the late Victory; but found our Room, which one ſhould have hop'd to have ſeen full of good Humour and Alacrity upon ſo glorious an Occaſion, full of ſowr Animals, enquiring into the Action, in Doubt of what had happen'd, and fearful of the Succeſs of their Country. It is natural to believe eaſily what we wiſh heartily; and a certain Rule, That they are not Friends to a glad Occaſion, who ſpeak all they can againſt the Truth of it; who end their Argument againſt our Happineſs, that they wiſh it otherwiſe. When I came into the Room, a Gentleman was declaiming; If (ſays he) we have ſo great and compleat a Victory, Why have we not the Names of the Priſoners? Why is not an exact Relation of the Conduct of our Generals laid before the World? Why do we know not where or whom to applaud? If we are victorious, Why do we not give an Account of our Captives and our Slain? But we are to be ſatisfy'd with general Notices we are Conquerors, and to believe it ſo. Sure this is approving the deſpotick Way of treating the World, which we pretend to fight againſt, if we ſit down ſatisfy'd with ſuch contradictory Accounts, which have the Words of Triumph, but do not bear the Spirit of it. I whiſper'd Mr. *Greenhat*, Pray what can that diſſatisfied Man be? He is, anſwer'd he, a Character you have not yet perhaps obſerv'd. You have heard of Battle-Painters, have mentioned a Battle-Poet; but this is a Battle-Critick. He is a Fellow that lives in a Government ſo gentle, that tho' it ſees him an Enemy, ſuffers his Malice becauſe they know his Impotence. He is to examine the Weight of an Advantage before the Company will allow it. *Greenhat* was going on in his Explanation, when Sir *George England* thought fit to take up the Diſcourſe in the following Manner:

Gentlemen, The Action you are in ſo great doubt to approve of, is greater than ever has been perform'd in any Age; and the Value of it I obſerve from your Diſſatisfaction: For Battle-Criticks are like all others; you are the more offended, the more you ought to be, and are convinc'd you ought to be pleas'd. Had this Engagement happen'd in the Time of the Old *Romans*, and ſuch Things been acted in their Service, there would not be a Foot of the Wood which was pierc'd but had been conſecrated to ſome Deity, or made memorable by the Death of him who expir'd in it for the Sake of his Country. It had on ſome Monument at the Entrance been ſaid, Here the Duke of *Argyle* drew his Sword, and ſaid, March. Here *Webb*, after having an accompliſh'd Fame for Gallantry, expos'd himſelf like a common Soldier. Here *Rivett*, who was wounded at the Beginning of the Day, and carry'd off as dead, return'd to the Field, and receiv'd his Death. Medals had been ſtruck for our General's Behaviour when he firſt came into the Plain. Here was the Fury of the Action, and here the Hero ſtood as fearleſs as if invulnerable. Such certainly had been the Cares of that State for their own Honour, and in Gratitude to their Heroick Subjects. But the Wood entrench'd, the Plain made more impaſſable than the Wood, and all the Difficulties oppos'd to the moſt gallant Army, and moſt intrepid Leaders that ever the Sun ſhone upon, are treated by ſome in the Talk of this Room as Objections to the Merit of our Leader and our Army: But (continu'd he) I leave all the Examination of this Matter, and a proper Diſcourſe on our Senſe of Publick Actions, to my Friend Mr. *Bickerſtaff*, who may let Beaus and Gameſters reſt, till he has examin'd into the Reaſons of Men's being Malecontents, in theonly Nation that ſuffers profeſs'd Enemies to breath in open Air.

From my own Apartment, September 7.

The following Letters are ſent to me from Relations; and tho' I do not know who and who are intended, I publiſh them. I have only writ Nonſence if there is nothing in 'em; and done a good Action if they alarm any heedleſs Men againſt the Fraternity of the Knights whom the *Greeks* call Παιγνιας.

Mr. *Bickerſtaff*,

'IT is taken very ill by ſeveral Gentlemen here, that you are ſo little vigilant, as to let the 'Dogs run from their Kennel to this Place. Had 'you done your Duty, we ſhould have had No'tice of their Arrival; but the *Sharpers* are now 'become ſo formidable here, that they have divi'ded themſelves into Nobles and Commons. Beau '*Bogg*, Beau *Pert*, *Rake*, and *Tallboy*, are of their 'Upper Houſe; Broken Captains, Ignorant Attor'neys, and ſuch other Bankrupts, from induſtrious 'Profeſſions, compoſe their Lower Order. Among 'theſe Two Sets of Men there happen'd here late'ly ſome unhappy Differences: Squire *Humphry* 'came down among us with Four Hundred Gui'nea's. His raw Appearance, and certain Signals 'in the good-natur'd Muſcles of *Humphry*'s Coun'tenance, alarm'd the Societies: For *Sharpers* are 'as skilful as Beggars in Phiſiognomy, and know 'as well where to hope for Plunder, as the others 'to ask for Alms. *Pert* was the Man exactly fitted 'for taking with *Humphry* as a Fine Gentleman; 'for a raw Fool is ever enamour'd with his Con'trary, a Coxcomb; and a Coxcomb is what the 'Booby, who wants Experience, and is unus'd to 'Company, regards as the Firſt of Men. He ever 'looks at him with Envy, and would certainly 'be ſuch, if he were not oppreſs'd by his Ruſticity 'or Baſhfulneſs. There aroſe an intire Friendſhip 'by this Sympathy between *Pert* and *Humphry*, 'which ended in ſtripping the latter. We now

'could

could see this forlorn Youth for some Days Moneyless, without Sword, and one Day without his Hat, and with secret Melancholy pining for his Snuff-box; the Jest of the whole Town, but most of those who robb'd him. At last fresh Bills came down, when immediately their Countenances clear'd up, ancient Kindness and Familiarity renew'd, and to Dinner he was invited by the Fraternity. You are to know, that while he was in his Days of Solitude, a Commoner, who was excluded from his Share of the Prey, had whisper'd the 'Squire, that he was bit, and caution'd him of venturing again. However, Hopes of recovering his Snuff-box, which was given him by his Aunt, made him fall to play after Dinner; yet mindful of what he was told, he saw something that provok'd him to tell 'em, they were a Company of *Sharpers*. Presently *Tallboy* fell on him, and being too hard at Fifty-cuffs, drove him out of Doors. The valiant *Pert* followed, and kick'd him in his Turn; which the 'Squire resented, as being nearer his Match; so challeng'd him: But differing about Time and Place, Friends interposed, (for he had still Money left) and perswaded him to ask Pardon for provoking 'em to beat him, and they ask'd his for doing it. The House consulting whence *Humphry* could have his Information, concluded it must be from some malicious Commoner; and to be reveng'd, Beau *Bogg* watch'd their Haunts, and in a Shop where some of them were at Play with Ladies, shew'd Dice which he found, or pretended to find; and declaring how false they were, warn'd the Company to take Care who they play'd with. By this seeming Candour, he clear'd his Reputation at least to Fools, and some silly Women; but it was still blasted by the 'Squire's Story with thinking Men: However he gain'd a great Point by it; for the next Day he got the Company shut up with himself and Fellow Members, and robb'd 'em at Discretion.

'I cannot express to you with what Indignation 'I behold the noble Spirit of Gentlemen degenerated to that of private Cut-Purses. 'Tis in vain to hope a Remedy, while so many of the Fraternity get and enjoy Estates of Twenty, Thirty, and Fifty Thousand Pounds with Impunity, creep into the best Conversations, and spread the infectious Villany through the Nation, while the lesser Rogues, that rob for Hunger or Nakedness, are sacrific'd by the blind, and in this Respect, partial and defective, Law. Could you open Men's Eyes against the Occasion of all this, the great Corrupter of our Manners and Morality, the Author of more Bankrupts than the War, and sure Bane of all Industry, Frugality, and good Nature; in a Word, of all Virtues; I mean, publick or private Play at Cards or Dice; How willingly would I contribute my utmost, and possibly send you some Memoirs of the Lives and Politicks of some of the Fraternity of great Figure, that might be of Use to you in setting this in a clear Light against next Session; that all who care for their Country or Posterity, and see the pernicious Effects of such a publick Vice, may endeavour its Destruction by some effectual Laws. In Concurrence to this good Design, I remain,

Bath, August 30.

Your Humble Servant, &c.

Mr. Bickerstaff, *Friday, Sept.* 2.

'I Heartily join with you in your laudable Design against the *Mirmidons*, as well as your late Insinuations against *Coxcombs of Fire*; and I take this Opportunity to congratulate you on the Success of your Labours, which I observ'd Yesterday in one of the hottest *Firemen* in Town, who not only affects a soft Smile, but was seen to be thrice contradicted without shewing any Sign of Impatience. These, I say, so happy Beginnings promise fair, and on this Account I rejoice you have undertaken to unkennel the Curs; a Work of such Use, that I admire it so long escap'd your Vigilance; and exhort you, by the Concern you have for the good People of *England*, to pursue your Design; and that these Vermin may not flatter themselves that they pass undiscover'd, I desire you'd acquaint *Jack Haughty*, that the whole Secret of his bubbling his Friend with the *Snifs* at the *Thatch'd-house* is well known, as also his sweetning the Knight; and I shall acknowledge the Favour.

Your Humble Servant, &c.

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